

KABC-TV – Channel 7

Study: SoCal Quality Of Life Threatened

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LOS ANGELES — State budget cuts, increasing traffic congestion and rising home prices are threatening the quality of life in Southern California, according to an annual study released Thursday by a regional planning agency.

The "State of the Region" survey by the Southern California Association of Governments graded the six-county region a D- minus for transportation, D+ for housing, C- for air quality and D for education. In other categories, the region scored a B for employment and C- for income.

"Southern California is one of the most dynamic regions in the world, but the challenges we face are significant," said Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge, chairman of the SCAG task force that issued the report. "We sincerely believe that this report should serve as an alarm bell for the region and for elected officials at all levels of government."

The report said the region had the nation's worst traffic congestion, with associated costs at \$12 billion.

A major byproduct of traffic congestion was the air quality, which has worsened longterm despite a recent gain. The number of days in which the south coast air basin exceeded federal ozone standards increased from 49 days in 2002 to 68 days in 2003, the report said. In 2004, however, there were only 28 days when pollution levels exceeded federal standards.

In the housing market, the report found that less than one-third of Southern California households could afford a median-priced home.

The region, compared to nine major metropolitan areas nationwide, has the highest percentage of households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

The association, which is the largest regional planning organization in the country, serves a six-county region that includes 187 cities.

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